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ABSTRACT

Urban schools are not, in and of themselves, the source of all the problems with respect to urban education. But 4.6 percent of public school districts enroll 46.3 percent of all the students in this country, and urban schools have a significant role to play in determining how well or how poorly America's youth are prepared to function in society. Some problem areas that need to be addressed are: (1) the recruitment, selection, supervision, and evaluation of school personnel; (2) teacher education, both preservice and inservice; (3) school responsiveness and sensitivity; (4) the role of collective bargaining; (5) instructional time; (6) educational finances; (7) societal influence on students; (8) school accountability to the public; (9) parent involvement; (10) community environment; and (11) urban concentration and poverty. (Author/WP)

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NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE EDUCATION OF DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

SPECIAL REPORT

ON

URBAN EDUCATION

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

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TITLE I–FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES FOR THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN OF LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

DECLARATION OF POLICY

Sec. 101. In recognition of the special educational needs of children of low-income families and the impact that concentrations of low-income families have on the ability of local educational agencies to support adequate educational programs, the Congress hereby declares it to be the policy of the United States to provide financial assistance (as set forth in the following parts of this title) to local educational agencies serving areas with concentrations of children from low-income families to expand and improve their educational programs by various means (including preschool programs) which contribute particularly to meeting the special educational needs of educationally deprived children.

(20 U.S.C. 241a) Enacted April 11, 1965, P.L. 89-10, Title I, sec. 2, 79 Stat. 27; redesignated and amended January 2, 1968, P.L. 90-247, Title I, secs. 108(a) (2), 110, 81 Stat. 786, 787; amended April 13, 1970, P.L. 91-230, sec. 113(b) (2), 84 Stat. 126.

NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Sec. 148. (a) There shall be a National Advisory Council on the Education of Disadvantaged Children (hereinafter in this section referred to as the "National Council") consisting of fifteen members appointed by the President, without regard to the provisions of title 5, United States Code, governing appointment in the competitive service, for terms of three years, except that (1) in the case of initial members, five shall be appointed for terms of one year each and five shall be appointed for terms of two years each, and (2) appointments to fill vacancies shall be only for such terms as remain unexpired. The National Council shall meet at the call of the Chairman.

(b) The National Council shall review and evaluate the administration and operation of this title, including its effectiveness in improving the educational attainment of educationally deprived children, including the effectiveness of programs to meet their occupational and career needs, and make recommendations for the improvement of this title and its administration and operation. These recommendations shall take into consideration experience gained under this and other Federal educational programs for disadvantaged children and to the extent appropriate, experience under other public and private educational programs for disadvantaged children.

(c) The National Council shall make such reports of its activities, findings, and recommendations (including recommendations for changes in the provisions of this title) as it may deem appropriate and shall make an annual report to the President and the Congress not later than March 31 of each calendar year. Such annual report shall include a report specifically on which of the various compensatory education programs funded in whole or in part under the provisions of this title, and of other public and private educational programs for educationally deprived children, hold the highest promise for raising the educational attainment of these educationally deprived children. The President is requested to transmit to the Congress such comments and recommendations as he may have with respect to such report.

(20 U.S.C. 2411) Enacted April 11, 1965, P.L. 89-10, Title I, sec. 2, 79 Stat. 34, amended Nov. 3, 1966, P.L. 89-750, Title I, sec. 115, 80 Stat. 1197; redesignated and amended Jan. 2, 1968, P.L. 90-247, Title I sec. 108(a) (4), 110, 114, 81 Stat. 786-788, amended and redesignated April 13, 1970, P.L. 91-230, Title I, secs. 112, 113(b) (4), 84 Stat. 125, 126.

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OVERVIEW

Public education in America is a frequent topic of conversation and a subject which regularly finds its way into the print and electronic media. Despite the criticism often voiced in these settings, public schools of the nation are a valuable national resource. While there may be justification for some of the criticism leveled at the public schools, there is also much to be said about the success of public education. That success has come about because society acting through the public school governance system has produced changes in public education. Those changes have been aimed not only at improving the quality of the product but also at increasing the number of youth who remain in public schools through graduation. Similarly the failures of public education have occurred, at least in part, because society has not always effectively utilized and participated in the public school governance system.

The governance of the public schools in America is based upon two important concepts: lay control and local control.

The layman plays a unique role in American public education. Not only does the layman have influence as a member of the general society through the power of the ballot box but also directly as a member of the board which establishes policy for the operation of schools.

There is increasing pressure which is bringing about a serious erosion of the extent to which laymen actually control American

public education. The growth of unionism among employees of public schools, for example, has resulted in increased political involvement by these employees. This has manifested itself in two ways:

1) attempts to elect to Boards of Education persons who will support employee organization positions including public education policy;

2) increasing numbers of professional educators being elected to Boards of Education.

Both of these represent intrusions into the lay control of public education policy which has been a unique and significant characteristic of American public education.

At the same time that these intrusions are being made into lay control of American public education, local control is also being weakened. A real strength of public education in America has been the desire, and the opportunity for, each state and each community in each state to establish a system of public education consistent with the aims and philosophy of that state or community. Such choice and control has been weakened both from within and outside of the state and local community. Local communities, pressed by financial considerations, have been willing to accept state and federal controls in return for state and federal funds. State and federal agencies have used funds as "carrots" to induce local communities to change the aims and policies of their school systems. What in the beginning seemed simple and to represent no intrusion into local control has frequently been found later to represent substantial control from the state or federal level.

Frequently this intrusion results from legal opinions and/or court decisions which introduce elements well beyond the imagination of either the local or state and federal agency involved. Having occurred over a period of several years this shift in authority is justifiably causing many to reexamine closely that which has taken place.

As society changes, both the demands on public education and the conditions under which public education take place also change. The inevitable consequence of most societal change is unmet needs of youth or changes in public education to meet those needs which are brought about or significantly affected by changes in society.

Public education in the global sense has been affected by newly emerging needs growing out of societal change. Probably no where has this been more evident than in the urban areas of the country. It is in the urban areas where the impact of many of those significant changes are both evident and perplexing in the larger community and the schools. It is in these same urban areas where the interface of so many influencing factors have created a very complex set of issues which the community and its schools must address. With newly emerging issues and needs to be met there are also needs of long standing which apathy, neglect, insensitivity, conflict, politicization and lack of effective leadership have left unsolved.

The National Advisory Council on the Education of Disadvantaged Children has, in meeting its mandate of P.L. 95-561, identified urban education as a topic of major concern. Education in the urban areas

of the country is experiencing serious problems. The Council view is that these problems and their solutions can be traced to the institution (the school system), the client (those to be served by the schools) and the environment (the society in which the schools function).

The Council further believes urban education is a significant issue in need of attention if America's public schools are to address successfully some of the major problems. America's urban school districts, once the "lighthouse" districts in many parts of the country, have long since ceased to be such. More importantly, 4.6 percent of public school districts enroll 20.3 million students or 46.3 percent of the total student enrollment of the country.[1/] The urban schools of America have a significant role to play in how well or how poorly America's youth are prepared to function effectively in a highly complex and increasingly technological society.

INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS

It is not the intent of the Council to advocate that the urban schools are in and of themselves, the source of either all of the problems of all of the solutions with respect to urban education. This should become evident as one continues to review this report. It is rather the position of the Council that a number of institutional factors have received too little attention in years past, which when

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1/ Digest of Educational Statistics, 1976, N.C.E.S.: USOE.

combined with institutional factors receiving too little attention today, are the sources of many of the problems in urban education.

These institutional factors cannot be ignored if education in the urban America is to serve the youth effectively. These factors are not unique to urban education. It is the impact of these factors in the urban setting and their concomitant significance for American public education which causes the Council to attach high priority to those factors in this report.

Recruitment and Selection of Personnel

American public education has until very recently been subjected to a "sellers market." Decades of teacher shortages have shaped school personnel recruitment and selection procedures including those in the urban school districts. Many years ago the urban centers attracted large numbers of applicants who were interested in many of the employment opportunities and benefits offered, including generally higher salaries. The changing nature of many of America's urban centers brought changes in these employment opportunities and benefits. It also brought about conditions which saw veteran staff seeking transfers away from "certain" inner city schools and which curtailed the supply of teachers available for assignment to these schools.

To a significant extent urban school systems have left unchanged the recruitment and selection procedures as well as transfer policies which are outdated and ineffective in addressing current conditions. It is now a "buyer's market" which can only be effectively utilized by appropriate recruitment and selection techniques. Such recruitment

and selection techniques must reflect a new activism and a shift away from the passive nature of many of today's urban school district personnel programs. This activism should start with review and revision of personnel selection and assignment policies, should extend to personnel recruitment and evaluation and should include aggressive efforts to capitalize on the "buyers market" which exists.

Supervision and Evaluation

The supervisory program found in most school systems today is no more realistic or appropriate than the recruitment and selection procedures. Supervisory staff roles are frequently unclear and tend toward curriculum development activities rather than program and personnel evaluation. Most supervisory staff have completed courses of study devoid of solid preparation in either program or personnel evaluation. The typical school district devotes 90 percent or more of its budget to personnel but devotes little to this kind of evaluation. Most urban school districts could carry out effective supervisory and evaluation programs by making better use of resources currently devoted to supervisory staff. Presently the tasks performed by supervisory staff are frequently irrelevant and of insufficient priority to justify their cost in view of today's financial limitations.

In many districts claiming to have evaluation programs one finds programs which are superficial, inadequately implemented or unrelated to important components of effective performance. The result is a lack of information with which to determine how well the vast majority of school dollars are being used to accomplish the purposes for which schools exist.

Effective programs for personnel evaluation can and should be in use in every school system in the country. Urban America with its multiplicity of problems cannot afford to allocate resources without a more serious and effective monitoring of what those resources are producing. The major aim of evaluation programs should be the improvement of performance. The general public, Boards of Education, school administrators, teachers and other school employees must know and accept the fact that failure of an employee to improve performance means dismissal from employment. Too many school systems have been hampered for too long by legal procedures and, at times by public reaction, which have made the dismissal of teachers and other school employees difficult and distasteful for those charged with such decisionmaking authority.

It is time for the public to expect quality performance from those employed in the schools. It is time for legislative bodies to accept the responsibility for statutes which are clear and free from technical language which goes beyond the basic due process so that ineffective employees can be dismissed fairly and without exhorbitant cost.

Professional Preparation-Preservice and Inservice

There has and continues to be a surplus of candidates for teacher education. With the exception of a few states there has not been a concomitant increase in the quality of the product from teacher education institutions. Not only have teacher education institutions done too little to upgrade the quality of professional preparation,

but it is becoming increasingly evident that many who complete programs of teacher education lack the basic skills they are supposed to teach in reading, mathematics and use of the English language. While it may be inevitable that some who complete teacher education will not necessarily be good teachers, there is no valid reason for graduating students who lack the basic skills in reading the English language and in mathematics.

Inservice education of teachers and other school personnel presents a vast array of programs which vary in approach and effectiveness from school district to school district. The effective programs appear to be those directed at the development of specific skills which will contribute to the accomplishment of specific educational outcomes. Many urban school districts have established some such programs.

The major obstacles seem to be financial. Schools face two finance related issues which have not received adequate attention:

1) elimination, restriction or substantial reduction in the granting of salary credit for college courses taken at the discretion of the teacher or employee.

2) consideration of the merits of retraining a veteran staff member versus the option of recruiting recent graduates who may have the necessary skills.

Millions of dollars are expended annually by America's school systems to pay teachers for additional college credit earned. Many of the credits have no bearing on the teaching assignment much less the effectiveness of the teaching. In many instances, the teacher is enrolled in college with the intent of entering a totally different

career. School districts could put this money to better use through a variety of ways, one of which could be adequate funding for an effective inservice program.

School districts must constantly reexamine practices and procedures in such a way as to determine whether expenditures made offer any return on investment of public money. They must decide if the investment of money in retraining presently-employed staff is more educationally and financially beneficial than recruitment of new staff. Both inservice education and recruitment cost money. School districts must calculate and consider the cost of these alternatives.

Personnel Responsiveness and Sensitivity

Urban school districts must deal with anonymity in students and in personnel. It is a simple fact of life that the larger the organization (school district) and the larger the community, the more anonymity and depersonalization become significant factors.

Urban districts have always had to utilize specific processes and techniques to insure appropriate responsiveness and sensitivity to students, parents and the community. This continues to be a problem and one which many urban school districts are not addressing effectively.

Urban school districts are in fact bureaucracies, through no fault of their own, but,as a result of their size. But bureaucracy, unresponsiveness, and insensitivity are not synonomous. The bureaucracy of many urban school districts is unresponsive and insensitive but it can become responsive and sensitive if the public demands it and if Boards of Education address that demand appropriately.

Organizational Responsiveness

Responsive school boards evaluate every decision in terms of the ultimate effect on the education of the child. There are significant dimensions of organizational responsiveness which go beyond those connected with school bureaucracy. These may be related to the philosophical, attitudinal, political and/or policy positions of the urban school districts -- stated or unstated. The inevitable consequence of organizational unresponsiveness is ineffective service to the organization's clients (the child). Whether this stems from a lack of concern for or attention to clients, a lack of accountability within the organization, ineffective use of resources or some combination of these and other factors, the result is the same -- less effective services to children.

No school board can be assured that every employee will, on their own, be responsive to the educational needs of children. But every school board can implement policies and procedures which will promote employee responsiveness and address effectively those who fail in this regard. In school districts such characteristics must be reflected by the Board and administrative staff if employees generally are to be responsive.

Collective Bargaining

Although not universal in school districts throughout the United States, bargaining with employees is practically universal in the urban school districts. While employee organizations frequently cite the advantages or benefits to the children of the school district--

there is clear evidence that employee organizations negotiate for their members and not for children. This is frequently not clear to the general public particularly in view of the information distributed by some of the employee organizations. Contrary to much of the information distributed, Boards of Education, not employee organizations, were created in law to represent the general public in providing education for children and establishing policy related thereto. If the children's interest is to be protected at the bargaining table the public must understand the role of Boards of Education. Boards of Education are the legally constituted representatives of the public in the bargaining process.

One of the major areas to which the public, Boards and administrators should devote attention is to the scope of bargaining. Teachers, as professionals, expect to, and should, be active participants in developing and implementing professional policies and practices. But such participation, should occur through the organizational and decision making structure of the school district as an employee, not through the employee organization as a representative of that organization. This should be the case even if participation is guaranteed in a negotiated agreement. Neither should professional policy and practice be included in the scope of negotiations. There is no justification for employees in the public sector having the right to bargain on topics other than those in the private sector: wages, hours, fringe benefits, and other conditions of employment.

Fair, good faith bargaining does not require that the public Boards of Education or administrators give up their statutory and

policy prerogative. Urban education has suffered where this happened. Legislative bodies at the state and national level should move with caution and careful deliberation in collective bargaining legislation which affects the public sector.

Instructional Time

It is significant to note that although the national average of daily instructional time for students is six hours, many cities only provide five hours of instruction. Examples of urban school districts providing five hours of instruction are: Baltimore, MD; New York, N.Y.; Cleveland, OH.; Washington, D.C.; and San Diego, CA.[1/]

Instructional time was limited in the past because of factors which are no longer valid in today's educational setting. These factors included overcrowded classrooms, teacher shortages, transportation limitations, out-of-school employment and family demands. Such considerations are no longer acceptable reasons for curtailing the school day.

The most influential factor affecting instructional time today is the resistance of teacher unions to undertake additional periods of instruction. In formulating teacher contracts, the instructional needs of the student should not be compromised.

The Council believes that educational attainment for all students -- especially the low-achieving student -- can be significantly

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1/ The School Day for Teachers and Pupils, 1970-71, Educational Research Service.

improved through additional instructional time during the school day. Thus, the Council recommends that urban school districts examine the instructional time they provide with the intent of increasing that time to at least the national average of six hours.

CLIENT FACTORS

Students enrolled in urban school districts and their families play a significant part in determining how urban school districts function. The Council does not view students to be causal factors in the problems of urban education. It is more appropriate to describe students as the victims of societal influences in the urban setting. Their educational needs, if atypical, and some are, are symptomatic of atypical societal factors. It is the Council's view that urban youth can become part of the solution by playing a significant role in utilizing the opportunities of public education. Education should enable youth to obtain for themselves economic, social and political self-sufficiency.

Within the urban setting today there are many factors which influence the attitudes of youth. These factors manifest themselves in poor achievement, dropouts, inter-group conflict and, various kinds of inappropriate behavior. While these manifestations are frequently traced to a long list of factors, there is generally a common denominator among them -- a high concentration of low-income people. These economic conditions are very evident in the urban setting in the form of hunger, poor housing, inadequate clothing,

inadequate medical and dental services, broken families and a host of other ills. In this setting it is hard to motivate young people toward tomorrow's needs when so many of today's needs are unmet. Add to these factors the repudiation of self-worth and human dignity which many minority students experience and the difficulty of motivating students to school pursuits is multiplied even for youth with above average ability. The task of educating large numbers of urban youth can only succeed when school systems are responsive, reward initiative, encourage creativity and when expectations for both employees and students are known and monitored.

Large numbers of urban youth are not achieving in basic skills. Test scores of all types, recognizing the limitations of testing devices, clearly reflect this fact.

Urban school systems must recognize that the urban child, no matter what the characteristics or background, is their client and that the client is to be served.. Regardless of whether it is apathy, insensitivity, lack of accountability, or lack of leadership at the Board, administrative or classroom level, these are the problems which need attention, and urban school districts must address them. Whether the problems are organizational structure, bureaucracy, internal politics, comfortable people who don't want to "rock the boat" or lethargy urban school districts must address them. <u>The public must demand accountability, legislative bodies must support that demand and the urban school districts must more effectively serve all of their clients</u>.

Parent Involvement

Education in America started from humble beginnings. It was a desire of parents, and other community persons, which brought about the organization of schools in literally thousands of communities as America was settled and grew. Unfortunately from these humble beginnings with active parent involvement has emerged highly complex urban school districts which have little or no effective community and parent involvement.

Boards are made up of community people: Title I ESEA has a parent involvement component; some school districts do appoint committees to determine which schools to close; and some school districts have active parent organizations such as PTA. Few school districts have written parents into policies which guide their involvement in the decision making structure of the districts. The involvement of parents in the decision making should be through advisory and consultative structures. Effective parental involvement does not require abrogation of Boards and administrative prerogatives. One must not lose sight of the fact that Boards and administrators have statutory powers and accountability which cannot be transferred but which can benefit from the advice of parents and the public.

Parent apathy is frequently identified by Boards and other school people as the reason for little parent involvement. But the apathethic, unresponsive, and sometimes hostile nature of Boards and school personnel are not conducive to parent interest, motivation, participation and support. Effective urban education needs interested, motivated, participating and supportive parents and community

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

The problems of the urban school system are not attributable solely to the institution or its students. The community environment from which these students (clients) come and within which the schools must function has a substantial effect upon the magnitude of the task and the capacity of the school systems to carry out that task. The environmental factors which impact urban education include teacher education, school financing and urban concentration of poverty conditions.

Teacher Education - Preservice

Shortages of teachers for years saw school systems barely capable of maintaining an adequate quantity of teachers, much less an adequate quality. With declining enrollments and a surplus of teachers an opportunity is now available for more selectivity in the recruitment of teachers. In some states public school people and education agencies have provided leadership toward changing and improving the programs of preservice education offered in that state. This commendable effort is needed in more states. Such efforts should emphasize the screening of candidates to insure that every graduate possess the necessary skills to teach effectively in their field of specialization and in reading. Since the vast majority of teachers are employed by a relatively small number of urban school districts, teacher education should focus on preparation for teaching in the urban setting.

Financing Education

The problems caused by continued inflation are the greatest factors in school finance today. The primary manifestation of this inflation in school district budgets is an ever increasing demand for higher salaries on the part of school personnel. Since ninety percent of a school district's budget is frequently devoted to compensation for its personnel, the impact of salary increases on the rest of the budget is clear. Either school budgets must be increased or other services provided children in the school setting will decline.

The taxpaying public must realize, however, that school employee organizations are no different than unions in industry or other parts of the public sector. Unions representing school employees use wage settlement in other sectors to develop wage and salary proposals for their members. Taxpayers who receive similar increases are going to be faced with public employees who want the same salary increase. If other elements of society continue to receive cost of living increases unrelated to productivity, school personnel cannot be expected to ask for less.

The Council supports accountability and the judicious use of resources in the education of America's youth. But the American public should seriously reexamine its priorities and assume a more responsible attitude in support of public education. This is not to say that there is not a need for tax reform at the state and national level but rather to say until that occurs no generation of students should have to bear the burden of inadequate support for their education.

It has long been known that the "cost of doing business" is greater in an urban area. While this is recognized in business and industry and is reflected in both costs and prices, similar allowances and adjustments have not been made in fund allocations to urban schools. The result is underfunded basic educational programs and underfunded special services to meet the special needs of urban students.

Many urban areas have undergone distinct changes as a result of population shifts and the movement of industrial facilities to sub-urban or rural areas. The effects of these events have seen urban school systems faced with less revenue in the face of increasing costs. The inability of urban school systems to meet inflationary costs has created serious problems not only in availability of properly prepared staff, but also in the availability of the necessary supplies and equipment for effective education. In many urban school systems, as with the cities themselves, property and physical facilities have deteriorated to the point that they are frequently unattractive, inadequate, unhealthy and unsafe. In spite of declining enrollment neither the facilities nor the financial support for the current operating budget are adequate in many urban school districts. In fact, declining enrollment has frequently compounded the problems of urban education where financial support based on enrollment is adjusted downward at a faster rate than operating costs can be reduced. Such procedures need to have the attention of state legislatures and state education agencies.

Urban Concentration

Urban education with all of its successes and all of its serious problems cannot be isolated from the effects of other urban factors. Regrettably, the same areas impacted with serious problems in education are also impacted with other crisis conditions. The neighborhoods where poverty is the worst are the same neighborhoods where the incidence of dropouts, lack of school attendance, low achievement, inappropriate behavior (violent and non-violent), and drug problems are also the worst. These are the same neighborhoods where inadequate housing and urban decay are most frequently found. These neighborhoods experience poor health and social services. In addition they are also characterized by problems of inadequate diet and haphazard family structure.

The schools and the cities which have to cope with these circumstances can do so effectively only when the commitment is strong, the personnel dedicated and responsive, and the financial support adequate and properly utilized. In many urban areas inadequate financial support results in "on-again-off-again" programs, interagency competition for scarce tax dollars, and personnel whose motivation has been dashed by "day-late-and-dollar-short" resources.

The problems of urban education are immense, however, key to the resolution of these problems is the cooperation of responsible agencies and the efficient coordination of their mutual efforts. Many of these problems can be resolved with the awareness commitment and support of the American people.

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